



***Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
January 28 – February 1, 2013***

Canadians want change on aboriginal policy, poll suggests: 56% see urgent need to change federal policy on aboriginal Canadians

[CBC News](#)

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Laura Payton



An exclusive Nanos Research poll conducted for CBC News indicates more than half of Canadians feel there's an urgent need to change federal government policy toward aboriginal Canadians. Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo speaks last month at the opening ceremony for the Special Chiefs Assembly. (Adrian Wyld/Canadian Press)

**An exclusive Nanos
Research poll**

conducted for CBC News indicates more than half of Canadians feel there's an urgent need to change federal government policy toward aboriginal Canadians.

More than half of those who responded to the poll describe the need for change in federal policy toward First Nations, Inuit and Métis people as urgent or somewhat urgent: 22.4 per cent see this as an urgent matter, and 34 per cent say it's somewhat urgent, for a total of 56.4 per cent.

Another 28.6 per cent described it less important, with 14.2 per cent saying it's somewhat not urgent and 14.4 per cent saying it's not urgent. Fifteen per cent said they were unsure.

The Nanos poll provided a series of options and asked respondents to say whether they felt each option would advance or not advance the cause of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada.

The majority of respondents — 62.3 per cent — said blockades of railways or roads would not advance the cause, with 14.8 per cent saying they would. Another 22.9 per cent said they weren't sure.

Almost half of respondents said a meeting of aboriginal leaders with the prime minister would advance their cause, coming in at 47.4 per cent. Another 22.9 per cent said a meeting wouldn't help, while 29.7 per cent said they were unsure.

Fewer people said they thought a meeting with the Governor General would advance the cause.

Response to a meeting with the Governor General was split: 39 per cent of respondents said they thought it would help, 31.1 per cent said it would not advance the cause of aboriginal Canadians and 29.9 per cent said they weren't sure.

A meeting with Gov. Gen. David Johnston was one of the demands Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence made during her protest. First Nations people have a traditional relationship with the Crown going back to when the first treaties were signed.

A summit on the future of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada was more popular. Almost half — 48.8 per cent — of those who answered the poll said a summit would advance the cause of aboriginal people, with 19.9 per cent saying it would not, and 31.3 per cent saying they were unsure.

Need clear requirements to succeed

The poll also showed confusion among Canadians over who represents which concerns.

Just under half — 45 per cent — of respondents said a meeting between Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo and Prime Minister Stephen Harper would help advance the cause of "First Nations, Inuit and Métis people." The AFN represents First Nations people from 630 communities in Canada. Inuit and Métis have their own organizations.

Another 31.1 per cent said they were unsure whether a meeting with Atleo and Harper would advance the cause of aboriginal people, while 23.9 per cent said it would not.

Nik Nanos, head of Nanos Research, says the more sensational options were the ones Canadians were least likely to support.

"The one thing that the Canadians would like to see and did think could advance the cause of First Nations and aboriginal peoples related to having a summit discussion and also having a meeting — meetings between the prime minister and key First Nations leaders," Nanos said.

Nanos says it's important to have clear goals in order to get progress on issues.

"I think for this to move forward, First Nations and aboriginal Canadians have to articulate clear requirements or a clear ask in order to continue the dialogue," he said.

"Leaders have to define specifically what they want in order to promote a public debate on the future of the relationship between First Nations people and Canada."

The poll indicates there isn't overwhelming sympathy for the cause, although there was high awareness.

Nearly half of respondents said aboriginal people have been treated fairly or somewhat fairly by the federal government, with 23.4 per cent choosing fairly and 24.7 per cent choosing somewhat fairly, for a total of 48.1 per cent.

The number of respondents who felt aboriginal people have been treated somewhat unfairly or unfairly came in at 38.9 per cent, with 21.6 saying somewhat unfairly and 17.3 per cent choosing unfairly. Thirteen per cent of respondents said they were unsure.

"The narrative that some are advancing related to injustices of the past [doesn't] necessarily resonate with all Canadians," Nanos said.

The majority of people who answered the poll — 64.2 per cent — said they had heard of the so-called grassroots movement Idle No more.

The poll surveyed 1,000 Canadians aged 18 and over on Jan. 18 and 19, 2013. There is no margin of error calculated for an online poll.

Harper offers no aboriginal apologies: PM boasts of improving lives, but critics call his record abysmal

[Ottawa Citizen](#)

January 29, 2013 7:26 AM

Mark Kennedy And Michael Woods



Prime Minister Stephen Harper made no apologies Monday for his aboriginal policies, boasting that the governing Tories have improved the lives of Canada's First Nations - from the water they drink and the houses in which they live, to the schools where their children are educated. Photograph by: Adrian Wyld, THE CANADIAN PRESS

Prime Minister Stephen Harper made no apologies Monday for his aboriginal policies, boasting that the governing Tories have improved the lives of Canada's First Nations -

from the water they drink and the houses in which they live, to the schools where their children are educated.

But opposition parties, which hammered away at Harper on the issue as the Commons returned for business after a six-week break, said Harper's record is abysmal.

Outside the Parliament buildings, several hundred protesters gathered to support the Idle No More movement and demand that the government address longstanding concerns of Canada's First Nations.

In question period, NDP Leader Tom Mulcair blasted the Conservative government for failing to consult aboriginals in connection with the weakening of environmental protections for lakes and rivers on First Nations territory.

Mulcair said unemployment among First Nations communities is as high as 80 per cent, schools are underfunded, and half of the homes are in "pathetic state."

The NDP leader said Harper promised native chiefs at a meeting one year ago that he would deal with these issues.

"He promised to attack these problems. But instead he attacked the chiefs. Will the prime minister finally ... take concrete action?"

But Harper, in his first parliamentary remarks on the aboriginal issue since it emerged in mid-December as a hot political topic, signalled that he will now adopt an aggressive salesmanship of his government's record.

"We have made ... unprecedented investments into things that will make a concrete difference in the lives of people," Harper told the Commons. "In skills training, in housing on reserves, in potable water, in schools, in treaty rights, in protection of the rights of women and of course ... in the resolution of many of the land claims."

But Harper has faced criticism from many aboriginal leaders for providing inadequate government leadership in those key areas.

The prime minister met Jan. 11 with some senior First Nations leaders, including Assembly of First Nations Grand Chief Shawn Atleo. Some chiefs boycotted the meeting because they complained it was not being organized on their terms.

Harper has promised further meetings with chiefs. But in the Commons Monday, he chose his words carefully, saying he would "continue to work with those positive partners who seek to make progress."

Interim Liberal Leader Bob Rae questioned Harper's assertion that progress has been made, noting that this is not how chiefs' feel.

"What further action is he going to take, what change is he going to introduce, that will in fact end the sense that the aboriginal population of Canada is being marginalized by the policies of the government of Canada?" said Rae.

Harper said Canada's aboriginals have never had stronger representation in the government than they now do in the Tory caucus.

Moreover, he touched on a theme he and other cabinet ministers have broached in recent days - that young aboriginals should be helped to take advantage of the jobs

and economic "opportunities" coming their way in resource development projects near where they live.

Rae said the government's plan to improve conditions for aboriginal peoples must be included in the next budget.

"If the government's plans are not part of the budget, then it's going to become increasingly difficult to take those plans seriously."

On Monday, New Democrat MP Romeo Saganash introduced a private member's bill to require federal laws are compatible with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which calls for equal treatment and a recognition that aboriginals have the right to remain distinct.

The UN declaration has been endorsed by the Canadian government, but it is a non-binding document. In the Commons Monday, Saganash and Rae urged the government to abide by the principles of the UN declaration.

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Tough job market faces aboriginal youth as population grows

[Metro Ottawa](#)

January 28, 2013

Graham Lanktree



*Metro/Graham Lanktree
Addressing the high
number of unemployed
aboriginal youth, Dr. Cindy
Blackstock spoke to career
counsellors Jan. 28 about
issues facing First Nations
workers.*

Today's job market is tough for young job seekers and more often than not aboriginal youth are being left behind, despite being the fastest growing segment of

Canada's population.

"Only four out of every 10 First Nations children graduate high school," said Dr. Cindy Blackstock as she gave a keynote address at Cannexus, an annual conference of guidance counsellors and career development specialists running until Wednesday, Jan. 30. "Every First Nations child wants to grow up to have the job of their dreams, but they need a proper education in order to do that."

At the conference one workshop examines the success story of Vancouver's Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society, which offers

interventions to those with substance abuse problems and skills upgrading and training. Another looks at some of the hurdles career counselors need to overcome to communicate with and help First Nations people.

In 2009, the unemployment rate among First Nations jumped sharply from 10.4 per cent in 2008 to 13.9 per cent. During the same time, employment among aboriginal youth aged 15 to 24 fell from 51.9 per cent to 45.1 per cent.

"Working with aboriginal communities is an important emerging area," said Riz Ibrahim, General Manager of the Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC) which runs Cannexus. "If you look at the demographics, the largest growth in the domestic population entering the workforce is in the aboriginal community. To ensure that those people are job ready and career aware is going to be very important as future contributors to Canadian society."

From 2001 to 2006, Canada's aboriginal population grew 20.1 per cent. As a result, First Nations are much younger, with a median age at 27 – 13 years younger than that of non-aboriginals.

Ibrahim said that part of getting First Nations into the workforce is tapping them in to the "hidden job market", since 80 per cent of jobs are not advertised. "It's finding out how to get those through colleagues, family, friends and other people in your network."

Nevertheless, to truly tackle the issue requires action at the root, said Dr. Blackstock. "We need to understand the structural issues that get in the way of their success and career development."

"The government knows that the inequality is there," she said. "It's really about Canadian citizens saying 'we expect every child to receive an education that makes them proud of who they are.'"

Experts clash over impact of NDP position on rights: Bill would require all laws to adhere to 2007 UN declaration

[Vancouver Sun](#)

January 29, 2013

Peter O'Neil



*Idle No More protesters rally outside the Aboriginal Affairs office on Melville Street on Monday. Read more at [vancouver.sun.com](#). **Photograph by:** Ward Perrin, PNG, Vancouver Sun*

All Canadian laws must be "consistent" with a 2007 United Nations declaration that says economic development cannot occur

on First Nations territory without local aboriginals' "free, prior and informed consent," says a an NDP private member's bill tabled Monday. The bill, sponsored by aboriginal affairs critic Romeo Saganash and endorsed by leader Thomas Mulcair, drew opposing views from two B.C. aboriginal rights experts.

"What this shows is a profound ignorance of Canadian law. I think it's irresponsible," said Tom Isaac, a private lawyer who represents governments and industry in aboriginal rights cases across Canada. "It would be a fundamental and wholesale change in how this country is governed," he said.

"Could you imagine a government having to get the consent of six or seven hundred First Nations on any action that might affect them?" At issue is the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was conditionally endorsed by the Harper government in 2010.

The declaration says governments can't implement legislative measures or economic projects without the "free, prior and informed consent" of affected First Nations.

Isaac said if Mulcair and B.C. NDP leader Adrian Dix are trying to reach out to middle-of-the-road voters, they should avoid statements that suggest they would strictly adhere to the UN declaration.

But Isaac's view that such legislation would give First Nations an effective veto over projects like Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline megaproject to the B.C. coast was rejected by University of B.C. law professor Gordon Christie.

He said individual rights are always weighed against societal interests, and the Supreme Court of Canada has already made clear in past decisions that aboriginal rights must be reconciled with broader interests.

"It's not as though it would put a brake on everything, it's not as though the entire economy would come to a screeching halt and there would be no mines and no pipelines," Christie said in an interview.

"It would just be that the government would have to actually sit down and negotiate these things with indigenous communities regarding what happens on their territories."

Saganash took the same line, citing one section of the UN declaration that stresses the importance of considering the rights of all citizens.

"That's just fearmongering," he said of the criticism.

Scott Fraser, aboriginal affairs critic for the B.C. NDP, said his party supports the UN declaration as a "lens" through which to view relations with First Nations.

He said the passage of a bill like Saganash's would "probably" not have an influence on how judges view First Nations rights cases being fought out in court. "But it would clarify what government needs to be mindful of and the directions they need to go if they're ever going to have a hope of fair reconciliation."

Aerial surveying is done through the Ontario Geologic Survey, a branch of MNDM. The surveying around Fort Severn is a continuation of last year's aerial surveying

around Weenusk First Nation, as the OGS is attempting to survey the shore of Hudson Bay for the first time since the 1960s.

The Weenusk surveying, however, has not yet been released following a conflict between Weenusk First Nation and the OGS over a lack of consultation on the plans.

Julia Bennett, spokesperson with MNM, told Wawatay that the ministry received Fort Severn's letter on Jan. 25 and immediately contacted the contractor doing the work to stop the surveying.

Bennett said the ministry is now in contact with Fort Severn leadership to determine the next steps in regards to the surveying.

Turn over files on Indian residential schools, judge tells Ottawa

[Toronto Star](#)

January 30 2013

Colin Perkel



The federal government is obliged to turn over its archival records on Indian residential schools to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, an Ontario court decided Thursday.

The federal government is obliged to turn over its archival records on Indian residential schools to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), an Ontario court decided Wednesday.

In his decision, Justice Stephen Goudge said the obligation to provide the materials is clear from the settlement agreement that established the commission.

"The plain meaning of the language is straightforward," Goudge said. "It is to provide all relevant documents to the TRC."

The decision comes in an increasingly acrimonious dispute between Ottawa and the commission over millions of government documents the commission says it needs to fulfill its core mandate.

The government maintained it had no obligation to provide the records in Library and Archives Canada.

The commission, under Justice Murray Sinclair, argued Ottawa's intransigence would make it impossible to complete its work on budget as required by July 1, 2014.

"We're grateful to be able to continue the commission's work of gathering and protecting for future generations documents that are relevant to the history of the Indian residential schools," Sinclair said in a statement.

"We especially acknowledge the clarity of Justice Goudge's decision."

Part of the commission's mandate is to help in a process of reconciliation, while yet another is the "creation of a legacy" that includes collection of records, taking statements from those involved, and classifying and preserving the materials.

"Canada's documents, wherever they were held, would have been understood as a very important historical resource for this purpose," Goudge said.

The residential school system, which ran from the 1870s until the 1990s, saw about 150,000 native children taken from their families and sent to church-run schools under a deliberate policy of "civilizing" First Nations.

Many students were physically, mentally and sexually abused. Some committed suicide. Mortality rates reached 50 per cent at some schools.

In the 1990s, thousands of victims sued the churches that ran the schools and the Canadian government. The \$1.9-billion settlement of that suit in 2007 prompted an apology from Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the creation of the commission.

In its submissions to the court, the commission argued the Canadian government was trying to renege on its legal deal with Aboriginal Peoples because sticking to the terms would cost too much.

Lawyer Julian Falconer, who represented the commission, called it a "truly landmark" judgment.

"The court's answers to the commission's reference will ensure that the dark chapter in Canadian history that is the residential school story will never be forgotten," Falconer said.

In opposing the court application, the federal government argued the commission had no legal standing to take the matter to court.

It also maintained its only obligation was to throw open the doors to the Library and Archives Canada to commission researchers.

Goudge disagreed on both counts.

"While Canada is not obliged to turn over its originals, it is required to compile all relevant documents in an organized manner for review by the TRC," the justice said.

Goudge also weighed in on the dispute over what constitutes "relevant" documents, saying not every document that mentions residential schools is key to the commission's mandate.

An evaluation of relevance is context specific and the obligation on the government to produce documents must be reasonable.

"Suffice it to say that Canada's obligation . . . is to provide the documents in its possession or control that are reasonably required to assist the TRC to tell the story of the legacy of Indian residential schools," Goudge said.

Jason McDonald, spokesman for Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Duncan, said Goudge's decision was under review but the government would fulfill its obligations.

"Federal departments have already disclosed nearly one million documents," McDonald said.

First Nations Rights: Confronting Colonialism in Canada

[Global Research](#)

January 31, 2013

Monique Woroniak and David Camfield



Canada has "no history of colonialism." So said Stephen Harper in 2009. Today the Idle No More movement is shouting down this lie through actions both creative and courageous. In its place, it is telling Canadians at large what some of us have always known: that the country we live in was founded as – and continues to be – a colonial-settler state.

Colonialism involves one society seeking to conquer another and then rule over it. European countries worked to conquer the Americas, Africa and most of Asia between the end of the 1400s and the 1800s. In the beginning, the goal was usually to gain access to resources – including

gold, silver, furs and fish – that could give a boost to the feudal societies that existed in most of Europe at that time.

As capitalism developed, it spread a new way of organizing how goods and services were produced which focused on profit at all costs. The needs of humans and of the natural world with its land, air and water, were given little to no consideration under this new system. In a short amount of time Europe's appetite for the natural resources found in the lands it would colonize grew enormously.

Colonialism After Capitalism

"Land. If you understand nothing else about the history of Indians in North America, you need to understand that the question that really matters is the question of land." Thomas King (Cherokee), *The Inconvenient Indian* (2012)

Two main types of colonialism grew out of capitalism's hunger for profit: colonialism based on exploitation of labour, and settler colonialism.



In most colonies, a small number of Europeans ruled over much larger Indigenous populations. In order to make profits from a colony, Europeans needed the labour of the people they had conquered. In these kinds of situations, the goal of the colonizers was to take wealth produced by the work of miners, farmers and, as time went on, sometimes factory workers. One good example of this was the work that farmers in India in the 1800s did to grow cotton, which was then

shipped to Britain to be processed in factories and sold at a large profit.

Colonialism in Canada was different. Here it took the form of *settler* colonialism (other states with this type of colonialism include the USA, Australia and Israel). Settler colonialism took place where European settlers settled permanently on Indigenous lands, aggressively seized those lands from Indigenous peoples and eventually greatly outnumbered Indigenous populations.

The Land Grab: Settler-Colonialism in Canada

Unlike the kind of colonialism experienced in places such as India, the main goal of settler colonialism was not to take advantage of the labour of Indigenous peoples. Instead, it was to displace Indigenous peoples from their lands, break and bury the cultures that grew out of relationships with those lands, and, ultimately, eliminate Indigenous societies so that settlers could establish themselves.

In Canada, the society that settlers established became capitalist and created an economy that continues to exploit people for their labour and the land for its many resources. Respect for life and the relationships between living beings and the natural world is not important to the capitalist Canadian colonial-settler state. Under this system the land is treated not as something that humans should live in a respectful relationship with, but simply as a resource to exploit (much like the owner of a company demanding workers produce as much wealth for him as possible).

Canadian colonial capitalism would not survive without access to Indigenous peoples' lands. This was true in 1867 when Canada was founded, and it is still true today.

Choosing Not to Look Away

The amazing energy, organization and assertions of Indigenous sovereignty that have recently taken place within Canada have shone a light on the truth of how the country was founded and how it is still run. Every week there are new and more actions – flash mob round dances, railway blockades, consumer boycotts, hunger strikes – that are working to force non-Indigenous people to see the reality of the country they live in and the ways that it continues to disrespect and abuse the original keepers of the land and exploit the land itself.

Bright lights are often described as harsh, but illuminating truth is an act of respect. Since its founding 146 years ago, the Canadian state has walked arrogantly, cruelly and carelessly forward, refusing to look back, and working to make non-Indigenous people believe they shouldn't either. The respect – even love – for the land and all of our relationships with it, and with each other, that has been expressed in recent weeks has challenged non-Indigenous people to take another look.

Now that the light has been shone, non-Indigenous Canadians have a responsibility to take a look at the truth of the country's past and present. A responsibility exists to look at the founding documents of our colonial-settler state and sources that help to explain their meaning and impact. A responsibility exists to look at the history of the lands we each live on and to learn who lived there before us and what treaties,

if any, were signed in the course of taking the land. And we have a responsibility to look at and learn about past and recent acts of Indigenous resistance.

Each non-Indigenous person will have to choose what to do after all that looking. One important teaching offered by Indigenous cultures is that knowledge is most powerful when shared, that stories are meant for storytelling. Having learned more of the true story of the Canadian state, another duty of non-Indigenous people is to tell that story, to insist on it travelling through all our circles.

Asking “Where could the story go next?”

One of the many gifts that the Idle No More movement is giving to non-Indigenous people is the opportunity to look at this country, the way it treats the people living in it and the way it treats the land and water we all depend on for survival and to ask, “Where should we go from here, together?”

We could, for example, ask what would it take to uproot Canadian colonialism? In his book *Wasáse*, Taiaiake Alfred (Mohawk) argues that “the most basic changes in colonial states required to create a just relationship and to set the foundations for lasting peaceful coexistence” are “the return of unceded lands, reforms to state constitutions to reflect the principle of indigenous nationhood and to bring into effect a nation-to-nation relationship between indigenous peoples and Settler society, and restitution.”^[1]

We agree. We also believe another question needs to be asked: who in the Canadian colonial-settler state would have the most to lose by giving up control over Indigenous lands? There is no doubt that the people who own and run corporations (the capitalist class) will fiercely oppose any strong movement demanding changes like the ones mentioned above.

We believe that as Indigenous peoples continue to assert their right to determine their own futures and the right to their lands, it will become more and more important for all of us to talk about the ways in which the struggles against colonialism and capitalism are connected.

In this moment, Indigenous peoples are loudly raising their voices to remind us about the need for respectful relationships between individuals, nations and, above all, with the land. Increasingly, they are demanding that we listen. But they are also asking us to join them – to look in their faces, dance holding their hands, and to stand with them as they stand for the land. For all of us. •

Monique Woroniak is a librarian who works, writes and does Indigenous solidarity work in Winnipeg. David Camfield is one of the editors of *New Socialist Webzine* where this article first appeared. Both authors acknowledge that they reside on Treaty One territory and the traditional lands of the Red River Métis.

For further reading:

A lot of good writing exists about the oppression of Indigenous peoples and their resistance to the colonialism of the Canadian state. Here are a few we recommend:

Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View*

Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*

Todd Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, Chapter 2.

Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*

Leanne Simpson and Kiera L. Ladner (editors), *This is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*

Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996)

Citizens Plus (the 1970 Red Paper)